

**RIQUET OF THE
TUFT: A
LOVE DRAMA**

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Riquet of the Tuft: A Love Drama by Stopford Augustus Brooke

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STOPFORD AUGUSTUS BROOKE

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Brooke, Stopford Augustus

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A LOVE DRAMA.

S. T. Brooke.

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RIQUET OF THE TUFT.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A wide garden looking to the south, with grassy spaces and many flowers and trees, and beyond it a wood, over which a mountain range is seen. The KING'S PALACE runs the whole length of the garden to the north, and has in front a broad terrace which leads by steps into the garden. The PALACE is on an upland, which falls on the west, through dells and broken ground, to the plain below; and in the east, the scene is filled with a lake at the head of which is a grove of stone-pines. It is the first day of May.

Enter with tools GARDENER and ROBERT, his son.

GARDENER.

A CHILL morning, Robert; the frost has touched the leaves.

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RIQUET OF THE TUFT.

ROBERT.

Aye, father, the flowers are sad, but what a sheet of dew is on the lawn. It looks like a silver sea; and listen to the lark, how he soars and sings, he cannot tell all his joy.

[*PRINCE RIQUET appears on the terrace.*]

GARDENER.

A happy bird, Robert; I wish Prince Riquet were as happy. See, there he is on the terrace. How slowly he walks, with his hands behind his hump, and his eyes on the ground. Life has been hard to him, for who will marry him? The kingdom wants an heir, and all the princesses hide their faces when they see him.

ROBERT.

If they would only wait and hear him talk they would forget he was so ugly; but they run away at once. Is it true, father, that the fairy Gentilla took pity on the Queen in her trouble and gave the little prince the gift of wit and pleasing more than other men? It would seem so, for we all love him.

GARDENER.

Yes, quite true. I never told you the story, for till quite lately we were not allowed to speak of it. I was in the withdrawing-

room with flowers for the Queen's chamber when the fairy came, and I heard all the women wailing over the cradle, and the King pacing to and fro, and now and then the weak cry of the Queen. Suddenly, a hush fell on the house, and I saw the fairy pass swiftly through the room where I was, and I heard her soothe the Queen. Her voice was like the silver lute the Prince plays on at evening by the lake, and her clothes were like the glittering moonshine, and her face was like pity and joy. And when she spoke all the world smiled and grew happy. She took, they told me, the little child in her arms, and touched its eyes and breast, and breathed upon it. "Fear not," she said, and she came with the babe to the Queen's bedside. "I will care for your son. He shall be happy and beautiful when he comes to love and be loved, and he shall be wise and witty even in sorrow, and gay and kind to all, and he shall be able to make the woman who loves him as wise and witty and pleasant as himself." And when she had said that she flitted away.

ROBERT.

I wish I had seen her ; you were lucky, father.

GARDENER.

More lucky than the Prince, for no one can love him in that way, and he does not care for any of the princesses he has seen. I have heard him say that no woman is so beautiful as those he